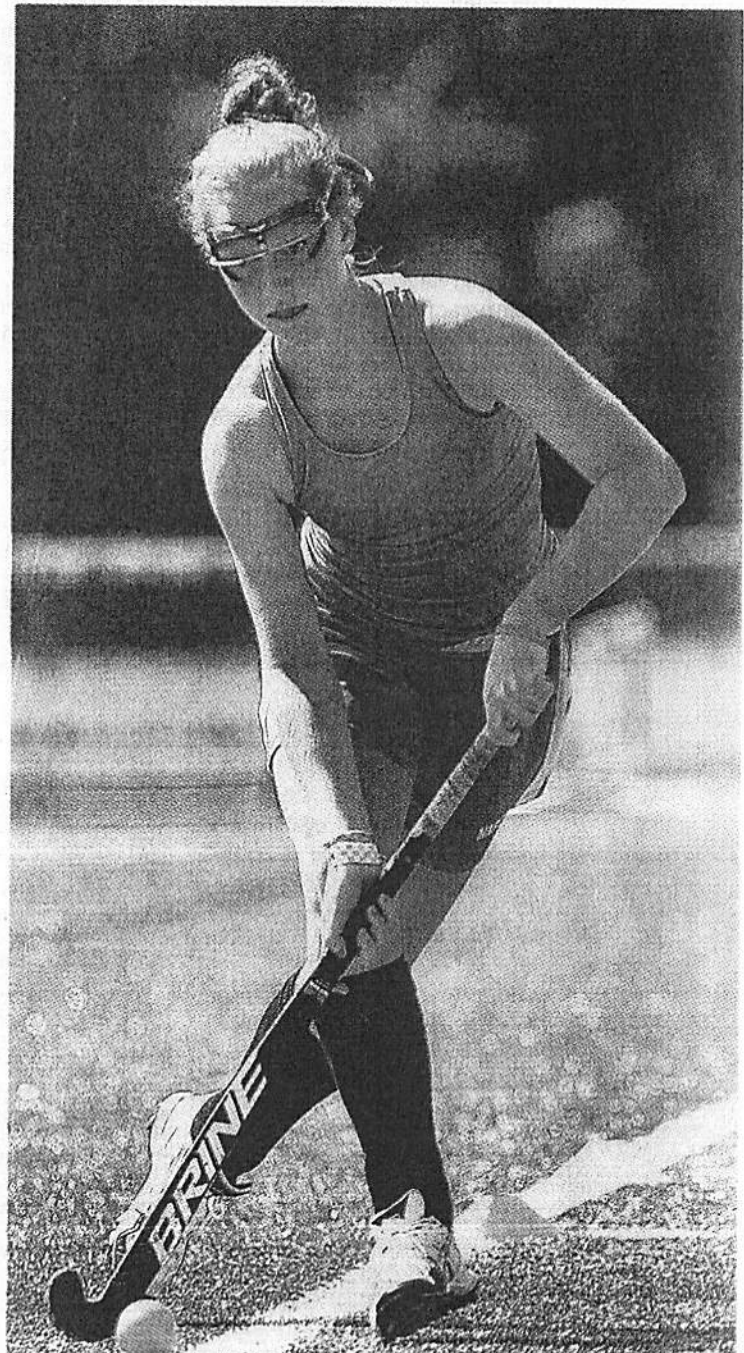


Sports

Fiery Murphy takes the lead, and Dragons follow

PHOTOS BY JOHN TLUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF

Duxbury High field hockey forward Hannah Murphy is "one of the most competitive athletes I've ever coached," says Pam Manley.



Duxbury junior expects much from herself, team

By Colleen Casey
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Hannah Murphy had never touched a field hockey stick before showing up for tryouts her freshman year at Duxbury High. By the end of double sessions, she had earned a position on the varsity, the ultimate goal of the 70-plus candidates who try out each year.

As a sophomore forward, she led the Patriot League in scoring with 26 goals.

"Going into high school I knew I wanted to play a fall sport," Murphy, now a junior, said before the Dragons' second practice session of the preseason last week. "I didn't want to play soccer."

She had experience playing ice hockey and felt the similarities of the two games made the transition easier.

A three-sport varsity athlete as a freshman (she also plays lacrosse), Murphy was a Globe All-Scholastic in both hockey disciplines as a sophomore, scoring the winning goal in the Division 2 state hockey championship in March (she finished the year with 27 tallies).

Coach Pam Manley believes that athletes who play three sports in high school are better in each respective sport.

"At the high school level you should be spreading and developing your talents," said Manley. "Hannah is developing her talents in three sports and she could play Division 1 in any of those sports."

Following the lead of her older brother, 19-year-old Ben, a junior hockey player, Murphy loves to compete. A younger brother, Matt, plays hockey and baseball.

Over the summer, Murphy participated in Circle Play, a two-day field hockey camp in Duxbury under the direction of Jennifer Averill, the head coach at Wake Forest, as well as the Dragons Lair, a local strength and conditioning program.

Dragons Lair was four days a week, starting at 6 a.m.," she said. Weight lifting and running at 6 was only the start to her long summer days.

"I would get home from Dragons Lair, rest, then do something in my backyard," she said. "I'm always practicing by myself, like shooting around lacrosse balls or playing with my field hockey stick." After her midday skills practice, she was off to a lacrosse game, or hockey practice for the Bay State Breakers.

"None of them conflicted, which was good," said Murphy. "It's still hard to do so much, though."

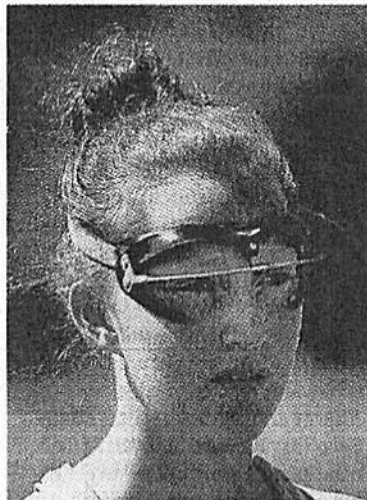
Her focus is now on field hockey.

With Murphy and senior tricapitain Grace Nissi (20 goals, 11 assists last season) headlining a talented cast, Duxbury has the right mix to repeat last year's unbeaten 12-0 run through the Patriot League and 18-2 finish.

"Everyone came out here at tryouts today to work," said Nissi, who has committed to play field hockey at the University of Michigan next fall.

The 17-year-old Murphy takes control and the rest of the Dragons follow her lead.

"Hannah's so focused on the game," said Manley. "She's one of the most competitive athletes I've ever coached. She's great with the stick. She has a lot of power and control."



'When I do play, I don't fool around. I'm always trying to make myself better.'

HANNAH MURPHY

Goalie Sophie Fitzpatrick said Murphy "has a hunger and a passion for what she wants."

"When we need a goal she can get it done," added Fitzpatrick, a senior captain who often defends against Murphy in practice.

Murphy is a good influence on the younger players, according to Nissi. "She sets the level higher which benefits the entire team."

The coach agrees. "Her example of skill level has put other people on the team to that level," said Manley. "She's a great leader by example and what she exemplifies is competitiveness, wanting to win, and expecting a lot of herself. When she expects a lot from herself, the people next to her think the same."

Tricapitain Core Connolly, a linemate on the ice as well as in field hockey, calls Murphy a great asset.

"You can tell she really wants to be out there," said the senior forward. "Since I play

with her for ice hockey as well, I always know her next move on the field."

Like Nissi, Connolly has high expectations for this upcoming season. "There's so much depth in our team," she said. "We have so much potential."

Murphy shares the same vision as her senior captains. "I hope we win the league again. I hope we have the same work ethic as last year," she said. "Eventually I hope we make it to the state finals."

Murphy would like to play a sport at the Division 1 level in college but is still undecided which sport. "I love all the sports I play, they're my life. They're so fun," she said.

For now she will focus on improving her play. "When I do play, I don't fool around. I'm always trying to make myself better."

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